

Report of the West Midlands Ambulance Service NHS Trust

Select Committee on Health and Adult Social Care – 29th September 2010

This report provides an update to Committee members on three broad areas:

- Progress on the implementation of recommendations of the Lightfoot Report
- Update on the Trust's application for Foundation Trust status
- Current performance and activity

Lightfoot Report

The Lightfoot Report was commissioned by the NHS West Midlands Specialised Commissioning Team following concerns from the Ambulance Trust regarding its funding level. This contributed to underachievement of performance in the first part of the 2009/10. Commissioners and PCTs were also concerned that there was inconsistency of service delivery across the Trust area with different models of working still in place following the merger of Trusts in July 2006.

The Lightfoot Report was submitted to the Trust and Commissioners in September 2009. It concluded that 'there are grounds for concern about the sustainability of performance and the clinical effectiveness of WMAS in its current situation and a need for a rebasing of the resource that WMAS has available particularly in Birmingham and the Black Country'.

Non recurrent additional funding was provided to WMAS during the winter months enabling the deployment of additional resources and enabled the Trust to achieve performance standards for the second half of the year though the overall position for the 2009/10 was not achieved.

The contract for 2010/11 requires the Trust and PCTs to deliver on a number of projects to ensure the achievement of performance standards. These include for the Ambulance Trust to reduce the percentage of conveyance of patients conveyed to Acute Trusts, redirecting them to more appropriate services, and for PCTs to reduce the number of 999 calls to the ambulance service.

Recommendations of the Lightfoot Report included the need for an agreed strategic vision to be developed for the delivery of unscheduled care. A strategic plan has been developed which outlines a 5 year plan for the Trust; copies of this plan will be made available to members. Workforce planning was one of the key recommendations of the report and this is now an integral part of the strategic and annual business planning cycle. As part of this a new role of Advanced Paramedic is being introduced to improve clinical care to patients.

A common approach to rota management and resource utilisation was recommended. The Trust is currently in the process of implementing a new structure and internal processes and one of the key features of this is a centralised resource department for each Locality. Also recommended was a common approach to performance management across the Trust's operating areas. The new structure will build developments to date which include a centralised information cell which collates performance and activity data in a consistent manner and this is used to inform decisions service improvements and evidence outcomes.

Clinical quality and improvements to patient care were the basis for the Lightfoot Report recommendations. As part of the new structure a clinical supervision model which is common across the Trust is being introduced. This includes local accountability for clinical care by managers and supportive mechanisms for staff. These will complement the improved governance arrangements that have been implemented.

Foundation Trust

The White Paper 'Equity and Excellence: Liberating the NHS', published by the Government in July, set out that all NHS trusts will become Foundation Trusts by 2013. West Midlands Ambulance Trust intends to open a three month public consultation on its application for Foundation Trust in October 2010. Following the consultation there will be a joint review of the outcome which will be undertaken by the Trust and Strategic Health Authority with a view to submitting the application in early 2011/12. The application process includes an assessment by Monitor, the regulation body for Foundation Trusts. It is anticipated that the earliest the Trust's application would be authorised would be October 2010.

Further information will be provided to members as the application process progresses.

Current performance

The table shows position at end of August for national performance standards with measurements shown for the Trust as a whole, the Black Country Cluster and Dudley PCT.

	Required standard	WMAS	Black Country	Dudley
Cat A	75%	78.5%	80.2%	83%
Cat B	95%	95.5%	96.1%	97.3%
Cat C + Referral	95%	96.4%	96.7%	98.8%

There has been a significant improvement on the position at the same time last year when the Category A performance for Dudley was 68% and 64.7% for Black Country. This is despite a 16.5 % increase in Category A emergency incidents in Dudley PCT area. The performance improvement achieved reflects some of the changes that have been implemented in the last year. This includes implementation of dedicated crews based in Dudley to undertake a large proportion of transports from GPs to take patients to hospital. This releases emergency ambulance crews to attend emergency calls. There has also been increase in the number of rapid response vehicles to help get to patients quickly. The numbers of staff based in the Black Country is also set to increase.

To conclude the Black Country and Dudley area in particular is in a lot stronger position than it was 12 months ago. There is still work to do as we continue to implement the recommendations of the Lightfoot Report. The winter months will also no doubt present significant challenges however the progress made is already providing demonstrable benefits for the patients and community we serve.

Richard Topping
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2nd September 2010